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By A. A. Freeman

Bolsheviki, I. W. W.'s, Labor Unions, Strikes, *et id genus omne*

By A. A. Freeman

In the spring of 1918, shortly after the strike of the letter carriers in the City of Victoria, I prepared the following article.

Why it was not published, it is unnecessary to say. The article is as follows:

"Ought Government officials to be permitted to join, or remain in Labor Unions, or any other Union, or Association, the propaganda of which may interfere with the proper discharge of their duties as Government officers?

In the discussion of any matter which relates to the general welfare of the public, the greatest care should be exercised in avoiding all vituperation or abuse. We must not forget that we cannot all think alike. Men differ in their views, and differ honestly, and that difference of views should be treated respectfully. Most men are disposed to do right. Most men are honest. But this consideration does not remove the necessity for combatting wrong or mistakes, by pointing out wherein the wrong or mistake exists.

The following pages are to be devoted to what I deem a correct answer to the enquiry contained in the heading of this paper.

I propose to establish the negative of the proposition.

I do not believe that a Government officer, no matter what the grade of the office he holds, whether postal clerk, or carrier, or postmaster, or the Postmaster General, or any other public officer, can "strike," as the term is understood.

I admit that he may abandon his office, may refuse to perform his duties, may resign.

But I deny that he can refuse to perform the duties of his office and still remain in office.

There are two reasons why he cannot remain an officer, and refuse to perform the duties attached to the same.

First: Before assuming the office he voluntarily takes a solemn oath that he will perform the duties attached to

it. When he refuses to do that—quits, or strikes, if that is a proper term to use—and continues to hold on to his office, drawing his salary, he violates his oath of office and thereupon disqualifies himself from further retention in office.

Second: It is absolutely necessary to the public interest that the duties of the office should be discharged by some one, and if the incumbent refuses to discharge such duties it becomes necessary for the public to employ some one who will perform them, and as the same office cannot be filled by two persons at the same time, the abandonment by the striker must be regarded as a resignation.

We all admit that if the incumbent dies, the office becomes vacant.

Well then, what is the practical difference between the death of the incumbent and his refusal to perform the duties of his office? In each case no one is filling the office. It is vacant.

If I am mistaken in saying that the abandonment of a public office creates ipso facto a vacancy; if, under the law as it now exists, a public officer may refuse to perform the duties of the office—abandon the work and go on a strike—and still hold his commission, draw his salary and refuse to allow the Government to fill his place, I repeat, if this alarmingly anomalous defect in the law exists, it cannot, for the safety of the public, be too speedily amended.

It is an unthinkable proposition, that a conspiracy of government officials may create a state of anarchy by simply refusing to perform their respective duties.

And yet, so far as the postal system is concerned, this was precisely what was done in the Capital City of this Province.

It lacked nothing but the co-operation of the other departments of the Government—happily not yet unionized—to create a state of absolute anarchy.

That a brave, intelligent and patriotic people, like those of Canada, should quietly submit to such a conspiracy is one of the wonders of this wonderful age. That they should sit down and quietly admit that their officers, their servants, might refuse to serve them, and at the same time refuse to allow them to employ servants who would serve them, would bankrupt our credulity if we ourselves had not seen this very thing done.

I am, of course, aware that the regulation of the postal system is vested in the Dominion, rather than in the Provincial Government, but, as the recent defection of the postal officials was aimed at the people of this City, I am persuaded

that this is a matter that concerns Provincial Officers to bring it to the attention of the Dominion Parliament, so that there may be obtained some satisfactory remedy.

It must be evident to every intelligent and seriously disposed man that this new-fangled doctrine, this modern revolution—for it is a revolution—will, if not checked at once, soon destroy government as a democracy and establish in lieu an oligarchy of unionized office holders. The people, instead of being the masters, are to become the slaves of a self-constituted official cabal.

Suppose, instead of remaining in the City, the postal officials, in the late episode, had gone off on some indefinite absence, some excursion, as well they might have done, what then? Could they have been allowed to hold on to the offices indefinitely? Their remaining in the City, holding meetings in an effort to compel the Government to increase their salary did not change the situation. The people, who provide the money to be used in the distribution of the mail, were without carrier service. It amounts to nothing to say that these officials did not remain out a great length of time. If they could remain out a day, and still hold on to their offices, they might remain out a year. The law does not provide the length of time an officer may remain out on strike, and in fact, as I shall demonstrate, it does not allow him to remain out a day, or an hour. He may be given leave of absence for a limited period; but that is another matter and does not enter into the controversy. These officers had no leave of absence; and their absence without such leave was in violation of law, and of their oath of office.

It amounts to nothing to say that the incumbent has struck for the purpose of compelling the Government to grant certain relief which he is asking. Suppose the Government refuses, what then? How long can the dissatisfied incumbent continue to hold the office, draw his salary, and yet refuse to perform the duties pertaining to such office? There are quite a number of well-disposed people who believe that this presents an issue for the Government to decide. That it is up to the Government to say whether it will, or will not, respect the demand of underpaid officers for an increase of salary, and that until the Government does respond, the people must suffer.

There is a conclusive answer to this contention.

In the first place, the office does not belong to the incumbent, it belongs to the people.

To illustrate: The people did not create a post office department for the benefit of postal officers, but for the benefit of people who are not postal officers.

Neither postal officials nor other public officers have any claim on the Government for any salary except that which they may have earned by the honest discharge of their respective duties.

They have no right either legal, equitable or moral to demand an increase of their salary. The offices do not belong to them. They are but public **servants** whom the people have employed to perform certain duties; and each of them has taken a solemn oath that he would perform such duties, at the salary which the Government provides. The Government did not promise them, as an inducement to accept service, that, if cost of living increased, it would increase their salary. And, in fact, the Government made them no promise at all, and did not ask them to enter its service; it merely yielded to their earnest solicitation. They were not drafted; they were not conscripted; they sought the office, and swore that, if it were given to them they would faithfully discharge their duties. If they found that they could not live on the salary, they had a perfect right to resign. They would not have been arrested as deserters. They had no claim on the office. There were hundreds of other people who would have been glad to get it, and would have observed their oaths and performed their duties. Having induced the people to appoint them they go out on what they call a strike, leaving the people to take care of themselves the best they can, draw their salary and do nothing, and invoke public sympathy for their forlorn condition.

There is something grotesque in the situation that I find it difficult to treat seriously, but having promised that I would do so, I am bent on doing my best.

II.

The next enquiry to which I desire to direct attention is this: Can a public officer "**strike**" in the sense in which that term is universally used?

What's a "strike" anyway?

The commonly accepted definition of that term is that it is an agreement among a number of employees to quit the service of the employer, in order to compel him to increase the wages being paid, or as a protest against the threatened diminution of such wages.

It necessarily follows, therefore, that there must exist contractual relations between the strikers and the employer.

But no such relation exists between the Government and the officer.

The Government does not agree to pay him **wages** for the work he performs. He is not an employee within the meaning of the term. He is a public servant whom the people have appointed to perform certain duties. He has taken an oath to perform those duties, and the Government has undertaken to pay him the **salary** attached to the office so long as he performs those duties.

But there is a more substantial reason than this for saying that a Government officer cannot "strike."

A strike is against the interest of the party who is receiving the benefit of the striker's labor and who is charged with the duty of paying him. But a strike of public officers, if a strike it may be called, is against the people who had nothing personally to do with his appointment; who did not fix his salary and who are powerless to increase it even if they think it ought to be done. These people, whose interests are thus sacrificed, pay their proportion of the taxes levied for the payment of the officers' salary and yet get no benefit of his services.

We had a very striking illustration of the beauties of the strike propaganda in this, the Capital City of the Province. Our indefatigable postmaster, in his effort to see that the people received their mail, distributed it in large allotments to various parts of the City, with the request that non-officials would exert themselves to see that it was distributed among the people addressed. Some of the people were besieging the post office, and others running hither and thither in an effort to find their mail, during which time the carriers, who had been paid by the people to deliver their mail, and who had sworn to do so, were loafing about the City drawing their salary.

III.

The next enquiry to which I desire to direct attention is this:

Should a Government officer be allowed to belong to a labor union, or any union, or association, to which he feels that he owes an allegiance greater than he owes to the Government, whose servant he is?

This question seems to me to embrace its own answer, and I really feel that I owe an apology for propounding, or

discussing it. And yet there are some very excellent people who believe that these striking officials did nothing more than they had a right to do when they, at the behest of the "union," violated their oath of office and went out on a strike.

I have said that I have no war to make on labor unions so long as they confine themselves to matters of their own. But when they assume to be a government within themselves, not responsible to the law of the land; when they use coercive means to control the affairs of others; when, for the purpose of intimidation, they denounce independent labor men as "scabs"; when they undertake to override the law by setting up a kingdom of their own, an "**Imperium in Imperio**" so to speak, it becomes a matter of serious concern to the people at large whether they will submit to this domination.

The strike of the postal officials was an announcement to the public that the unions, and not the Government at Ottawa, were in the saddle, and the people and the Government acquiesced in this announcement, the Government admitting that it was powerless to persuade the officers to return to their duty. The strikers defied the Government and it was not until the union authorities ordered the strikers to return that they obeyed.

A Government that will permit this insolent usurpation is not worthy of any respect.

One of the most astounding exhibitions of the audacity of the leaders of the union, and the servility of their followers, was given as a finale of the disgraceful proceedings here.

When the officials returned to duty, they did not do so at the request of the postmaster, nor on the command of the Postmaster-General, BUT ON THE ORDER OF A LABOR UNION BOSS !!

And the people of Victoria, the Capital City of this splendid Province, are today receiving their mail; not because the Government of Canada has organized a mail system; not because the people have paid their taxes to support that system, but because a labor boss permits them to receive it !

I have no attack to make, and shall make none, on labor unions, and so long as they confine themselves within the limit of the law, I know of no reason why they may not go about their business unmolested. All peoples have a right to form unions and all peoples have a right to join them or not, as they see proper. I believe that statistics show that about two per cent. of the people of Canada and the United States belong to some industrial union. I presume that the other ninety-eight per cent have a right to stay out of the unions if they so desire.

The Honorable Mr. Thomas Crothers, the Minister of Labor, in a very excellent address in this city, said that the people had as well make up their minds that the unions were here to stay.

Well, this statement of the Minister's was a prophecy, and he may be correct. I am quite sure I do not know—I think, however, that I can venture a statement which is not a prophecy. If the unions are to continue to push the propaganda set in motion by their officials; if we are to accept their view that the organization of the labor unions is superior to the organization put in force by our fathers when they created the Government of Canada; if it is to be understood that, when the sworn duty of a government official commands him to do one thing, and the union commands him to do another, the latter must be obeyed, then it is not a matter of prophecy, but a matter of fact, that **one or the other must go down**.

And this is the issue that the people of Canada are today facing!

It is very true that the Honorable Minister of Labor deplored the strike of the postal officials; but unfortunately, in my opinion, he did not predicate his depreciation on the proper ground. He said the strike was wrong because the officials were being sufficiently paid, which is a doubtful proposition; he ought to have said it was wrong because it was in violation of the oath of office and therefore in violation of law, which is **not** a doubtful proposition.

IV.

A POLICE UNION—A FIREMAN'S UNION.

If the members of the postal service have a right, so also have members of the police and fire departments a right to strike. Postal clerks and carriers have no monopoly of that right.

Let us contemplate, not the **possible**, but the **probable**, result. There is a strike of street car employees. The owners endeavor to start the service by employing other operatives. The strikers interfere, a riot occurs: the police are appealed to, to preserve the peace, but they too have gone out on a **sympathetic** strike. Incendiaryism becomes rife; the fire department is appealed to; but the firemen belong to the union and they too are out on a **sympathetic** strike.

Every wage union is on a strike except the fire-bugs and the burglars! This is no fancy sketch. This is precisely what will occur when each and every of the industrial and official

departments has unionized and formed a federation or confederation of unions.

The masses of the people, whose taxes support the government, will be the only people who are not unionized.

Is it not about time that the people themselves were forming a Union? A loyal country-loving law enforcement Union. A union of heads, of hearts, and of hands, to preserve the integrity of the Government, the enforcement of the law, and especially devoted to one duty, which now supremely overshadows all other duties, which is to win the war!

V.

THE SOLDIER'S UNION

We have thousands of gallant fellows at the front; houseless and shelterless; fighting day and night, to whom we are allowing \$1.10 per day. Suppose that they too, just on the eve of a battle, should go on a strike to compel the government to increase their pay, what then? It is no answer to say that they are too brave, too proud and too patriotic, to do such a thing. Of course they are. They are not letter carriers but carriers of guns, and may be depended on to do their duty.

I will conclude what I have to say by submitting one or two observations which I think peculiarly applicable to the times. Obedience to law, and the faithful discharge of all duties imposed on us, constitute the chief corner-stone of our political fabric—the sheet anchor of our ship of state.

If we abandon or, in any wise, depart from this one straight path, all is lost.

We cease to be a government, and become instead—a mob!

We cease to be Anglicised—to become Russianized!

Instead of presenting to the world, in magnificent grandeur, an Anglo-American party, by which term I mean to include all men who speak the English language and are disciples of Anglo-Saxon civilization and their allies. I repeat that, instead of presenting a front of this composition, which will stand like the Rock of Gibraltar against which German brutality, and Turkish fetishism may strive in vain, we shall, like Russia, become divided up into a soldier's and workmen's party, a socialistic party, a labor union party, an I.W.W. party and just as many other parties as the brain of fanaticism can invent.

It is a mighty good time to recur to first principles and to take our bearings from old and established landmarks. It

is not every change that is a reform. We are wiser than our ancestors, but I doubt if we are any better than they were. There are some paths which we know to be right; others are doubtful. Let us cleave to that which we know to be right. 'Safety First' is a good motto."

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Since the foregoing was written, now nearly one year ago, every prediction made by me has been verified in Quebec, Toronto and in Winnipeg.

The situation is a serious one. I doubt if we fully realize it. There is one effect which is being brought about, that does not seem to have attracted the attention which it deserves; it is this:

It is gradually widening the breach between the masses of the people and their officers. And as the breach between the people and their officers widens, a bond of sympathy between striking officials and the criminal classes naturally comes into existence.

A striking policeman has more sympathy for a burglar than for a law-abiding citizen who thinks he ought to be dismissed from office for failing to do his duty.

There was an illustration of the truth of this statement in an event which is said to have occurred in Toronto during the policemen's strike.

One evening about dusk one of the strikers walking along a street observed a burglar attempting to break into a house. The ruling passion was so strong that the policeman, forgetting that he was on a strike, arrested the burglar, who with surprise not unmixed with anger, said to him: "How is this? I thought you were on a strike; otherwise I would not have plied my occupation right in your presence."

The striker, tho a policeman, seems to have been somewhat of a gentleman, and recognizing the justice of the burglar's contention, apologized and released him.

I do not vouch for the truth of this story, tho I remember to have seen some account of it in a newspaper.

The interest which attaches to the story is that it might very naturally have occurred.

It must be evident to every intelligent man that this propaganda cannot be allowed to continue. It is growing worse, and either bolshevism must be stamped out or the government must go out of business.

One of the most prolific sources of official bolshevism is what is known as the Civil Service. That law ought to be repealed because the effect of it is that the fellow who gets in, thinks that he owns the office for life, and that it is utterly indifferent to him whether he discharges his duties or not.

The Congress of the United States has taken one very small step in the matter of suppressing government officers' strikes. In an approbation bill, it was provided that no clerk encouraging, or participating in a strike should have the benefit arising out of the appropriation which was an increase of salary.

It did not go far enough ; it should have provided that any clerk who encouraged or engaged in a strike should be at once dismissed and become ineligible for any further appointment.

This course will have to be taken in Canada and the United States ; and the sooner the better.

To think that a brave people like Canadians will allow a number of office holders to conspire together and place their pistol at the head of the body politic declaring in the language of the highwayman "your money or your life" is one of the wonders of this age of wonders.

Civil service is at the root of this evil. With considerable experience in official life in the United States I am prepared to say that inefficiency is the result of the civil service.

This is naturally and necessarily true. Let me illustrate: Take two men or women of equal intelligence ; say to the one you are fixed for life : you may work or play or strike for higher pay or do any thing you please ; you cannot be discharged. - - - Say to the other the tenure of your office depends entirely on your good behaviour and on the efficiency of your service. The day you begin to neglect your business you will be discharged.

Which of the two will render the more efficient service?

The question suggests its own answer.

If our law makers had the courage of a mouse, or the backbone of an empty meal bag they would put an end to this official strike business in a jiffy.

Turn the rascals out and put in honest men, who will observe their oath of office.

A press report advises us that at a conference of the union leaders at Winnipeg a motion was offered to order restau-

rants not to supply food except to those wearing union buttons.

Can this be possible? Have we indeed fallen so low as this?

Is a free-born Canadian to be told that he must join a mob he hates or starve? "Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer's dream, without our special wonder!"

The report does not state that the motion was adopted, nor does it state that the savage brute who offered it was kicked out of the meeting, as he should have been.

It is further reported that the mayor had announced his opinion that the trouble would be settled "to the satisfaction of every one." He is mistaken. He may patch up a truce; but the more you concede to the unions, the greater their demands. As well endeavor to satisfy the cravings of the cormorant, or slake the thirst by drinking the waters of the sea!

In my honest opinion we are approaching, if we have not already reached the limit of human endurance.

When it is announced, as at Winnipeg that the poor people of the country must starve or wear a UNION BUTTON it is time to call a halt. Let the People call a strike. Let public meetings be called and let the People take charge of their affairs and say to the unions and the bolsheviki: "We have had enough of this." If nothing else will suffice let vigilance committees be organized to put down the bolsheviki mob.

It amounts to nothing to say that the unions are not bolsheviki. If any difference exists it is in favor of the bolsheviki.

If we are to starve or join the unions, let us starve, but let us fight first.

The good people of Canada outnumber the union mob ten to one. Why then should they submit to the mob?

Victoria, B. C.,
May 24, 1919.

 If you are in favor of LAW and ORDER and GOOD GOVERNMENT, read this and hand it to your neighbor.